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TO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 029298
STADIS//////////////////////
E.O. 12065: GDS 1/30/86 (BRIDGES, PETER S.)
TAGS: PINS, RQ, GT
SUBJECT: PUERTO RICO
REF: GUATEMALA 510

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDO/MR
REVIEWED BY D2 DATE 3 MAR 1982
EDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED/RELEASABLE
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT)
2. REFTEL ASKS FOR GUIDANCE FOR RESPONS TO SAN CARLOS UNIVERSITY STUDENT ASSOCIATION (AEU) LETTER REGARDING THE DEATH OF A PRO-INDEPENDENCE PUERTO RICAN. DEPARTMENT BELIEVES EMBASSY RESPONSE SHOULD SIMPLY NOTE THAT DEATH IS CURRENTLY UNDER INVESTIGATION WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAILS. YOU SHOULD OF COURSE EMPHASIZE THAT NEITHER CIA NOR ANY OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE

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DEATH. BACKGROUND FOR YOUR INFORMATION ONLY IS PROVIDED BELOW.
3. THE INDIVIDUAL IN QUESTION, ANGEL RODRIGUEZ CRISTOBAL, DIED IN A FEDERAL CORRECTIONS INSTITUTE IN TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA, LAST NOVEMBER. HE WAS ORIGINALLY ARRESTED FOR HIS ROLE IN DEMONSTRATIONS LAST MAY AT VIEQUES ISLAND, PUERTO RICO, PROTESTING U.S. NAVY PRACTICE TARGET BOMBING OF THE ISLAND. HE WAS FOUND HANGED IN HIS CELL, AND INITIAL REPORTS CALLED IT AN APPARENT SUICIDE. HOWEVER, THERE WERE ALSO REPORTS (APPARENTLY CORRECT) OF A THREE-INCH GASH ON HIS HEAD AND BLOODSTAINS AROUND HIS CELL WHICH LED TO FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS.
4. WE HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SOURCES THAT BOTH FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS AND FBI REPORTS WILL CONCLUDE THAT THE DEATH OF RODRIGUEZ CRISTOBAL WAS A SUICIDE. BASED ON WITNESS REPORTS AND THE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE, THE REPORTS TO JUSTICE WILL CONCLUDE THAT HIS WOUND WAS SELF-INFLICTED, AND THAT THERE IS NOTHING INCONSISTENT WITH A DETERMINATION OF SUICIDE WHICH WOULD WARRANT CRIMINAL PROSECUTION IN THE CASE.

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5. BECAUSE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING HIS DEATH, HOWEVER, WE CAN EXPECT THAT A FINDING OF SUICIDE, WHEN IT BECOMES PUBLIC, WILL CAUSE A STRONG REACTION IN PUERTO RICO AND IN LEFTIST CIRCLES ELSEWHERE. AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH, SOME PRO-INDEPENDENCE ADVOCATES VOWED TO "AVENGE" HIM BY DRIVING THE NAVY OUT OF VIEQUES AND THE "YANKEES" OUT OF PUERTO RICO. THE MURDER OF TWO NAVY PERSONNEL IN AN AMBUSH BY TERRORISTS NEAR SAN JUAN IN DECEMBER IS SAID TO BE IN PARTIAL RESPONSE TO HIS DEATH. ACCORDING TO

NEWSPAPER SOURCES, THE DECEASED'S BROTHER RECEIVED A LETTER FROM ONE OF THE INMATES AT TALLAHASSEE WHO CLAIMED THAT RODRIGUEZ CRISTOBAL HAD BEEN TORMENTED BY ONE OF THE GUARDS, AND THAT HE WAS FORCED TO WORK AT THE DIRTIEST JOBS AND THE LONGEST HOURS BY THE PRISON KITCHEN STAFF. A SEPARATE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REPORT IS LOOKING INTO POSSIBLE CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

6. DEPARTMENT DOES NOT HAVE TEXT OF LETTER BY AEU AND WOULD BE HAPPY TO SUPPLY FURTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION IF THERE ARE OTHER UNCLEAR REFERENCES.

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